

# *Iowa Outdoors*

## **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

**www.iowadnr.gov**

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## **APRIL SYMPOSIUM WILL FOCUS ON CREATING AND RESTORING WETLANDS IN IOWA**

DES MOINES – A two-day symposium exploring the importance of wetland restoration and management will be held April 2-3 in Des Moines.

The agenda and registration for the symposium can be found at:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/news/09mar/wetlands.html>

“Wetlands have long been recognized for their value to wildlife, but it has only been in recent years that we’ve begun to understand the importance of wetlands in improving water quality for larger lakes and streams as well as reducing impacts from flooding,” said Tom Hadden, executive director of Metro Waste Authority in Des Moines.

One of the primary goals of the symposium is to explore options, both financially and socially, to restore wetland benefits for all parties concerned including agriculture and urban development. For instance, strategic use of state and federal conservation programs can assist landowners in maximizing unproductive land.

“Iowa has one of the most altered landscapes in the world. The restoration of wetlands provides not only environmental benefits in terms of improving water quality, but also economic benefits. In addition to hunting and fishing opportunities, wetlands are a haven for many non-game species,” said DNR Deputy Director Pat Boddy, who helped organize the event.

Wildlife watching, particularly bird watching, is the fastest growing outdoor-related activity in the United States. Quality wildlife watching opportunities can be a

boon to local economies that have wetland complexes designed to attract wildlife and, in turn, the people attracted to watching wildlife, said Boddy.

Prior to settlement, an estimated four million to six million acres of Iowa were in wetlands. It is estimated that nearly 90 percent of Iowa's wetlands have been lost with only California and Ohio having lost more, according to The Iowa Wetlands and Riparian Areas Conservation Plan.

In recent years, the Iowa DNR has been actively working on restoring some of Iowa's largest wetland complexes. A video highlighting the DNR's efforts to restore existing wetlands, "Reviving Iowa's Shallow Lakes," can be found at:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/video/index.html>

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## **TWO FAMILY TROUT EVENTS COMING TO DES MOINES AREA APRIL 4**

ANKENY – Two Des Moines area lakes will host a free family trout fishing day on April 4. The events are scheduled for Summerset Stat Park, between Des Moines and Indianola, and for the DMACC Campus Lake, in Ankeny.

The event at Summerset State Park is sponsored by the Warren County Izaak Walton League, Warren County Conservation Board and the Iowa DNR. Registration begins at 11 a.m. and the Warren County Izaak Walton League will provide a free lunch from 11 a.m. until noon. Children may register to win door prizes.

The DNR will be stocking rainbow trout at noon. There will be a limited amount of fishing poles and tackle available for participants who do not have any equipment.

The event at DMACC Campus Lake in Ankeny is sponsored by Des Moines Area Community College, Des Moines Izaak Walton League, Central Iowa Anglers and the Iowa DNR. Registration begins at 11:30 and trout will be stocked around noon.

Sportsman's Warehouse is providing door prizes and parking will be available on campus lots.

Both events are free, but participants aged 16 and older must be properly licensed and have a current trout fee. Children fishing with a properly licensed adult are not required to pay the trout fee, but their catch is counted toward the five fish daily limit. Children may purchase a trout fee and have their own daily limit, but children fishing without an adult must pay the trout fee.

**For more information, contact Ben Dodd, fisheries biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823.**

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[Electronic photos available upon request]

Spring Goose Chase Provides Lasting Memory

## **MILLIONS OF SNOW GEESE ARE CURRENTLY MOVING NORTH**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Remarkable events often have meager beginnings. Last weekend's spring snow goose hunt was a good example. The whole thing started with a single high pitched honk ---- the signature greeting of a migrating snow goose.

Immediately hitting the switch of my portable caller, I answered the call with the live recording of a thousand feeding geese. It was not until the electronic symphony filled the air that I began to peer skyward for the real thing. I had little trouble spotting the geese --- a group of nine pure white, black wing-tipped birds set against the sharp contrast of a cloudless blue sky.

The geese were way up there. By that I mean they were traveling at an altitude of at least 800 to 1,000 feet. Nevertheless, as soon as the sound of the taped calling struck their ear, the flock simultaneously locked their wings and began to spiral earthward toward the white decoys.

The geese appeared to mean business and rapidly descended to a height of 100 yards or so. A sudden increase in honking announced the arrival of a second flock, a grouping which easily contained upwards of 300 birds. Upon arriving directly overhead, they also locked their wings and began the decent.

More geese arrived from somewhere in the stratosphere, and then more geese after that. Numbers continued to escalate until, within minutes of when it all began, I found myself at the base of a feathered cyclone consisting of many of hundreds of screaming snow geese. The funnel could be seen for miles and more snows were arriving all the time. The whirlwind now contained several levels of descending birds, and the shrill yelping had completely drowned the sound of my amplified caller.

But as good as this all may sound, those of you who have pursued heavily pressured snow geese during recent years can already guess what happened next. Hanging up at a range of 50 to 60 yards, the swirling mass of geese continued to circle the decoys while stubbornly refusing to fly closer. This increasingly common behavior is just one the reasons why many snow geese manage to live well into their teens and that current populations have exploded to the point of destroying their arctic nesting grounds.

Although none of the geese would approach to less than 50 yards, there was nothing to prevent me from taking a few photos which is exactly what I did. Before long, an inquisitive group of eight or 10 geese moved dangerously close to effective range. I tried to keep an eye on them while continuing to shoot photos. Suddenly, and literally out of the blue, a lone goose appeared to the side. The bird was all over me before I could react. If the goose had been any closer, I could have knocked it down with a stick.

Trading camera for gun, I watched as the bird circled to the rear. Maybe his coming into the spread and not getting shot at would convince that bunch of eight or 10 to the same, I reasoned. Not so. After making two more passes, the single bird --- a mature, blue-phase gander --- suddenly drifted away from the decoys. A moment later, he changed his mind and returned at a height of eight or 10 feet. Looking to the side, I

saw the lower group was still hanging about 40 yards high. It was time to make a decision. Having been through this drill a dozen times before, I concluded that one fat goose in the hand is worth several hundred milling out of range. I pulled the trigger, and the season's first goose tumbled to ground.

My new pup, Jack, rushed to investigate. When compared to other waterfowl, snow geese seem to have a "unique and curious aroma" as one dog trainer put it. Many hunting dogs actually have to be taught that it's OK to retrieve them. I was delighted that, after an introductory sniff or two, the pup gently picked up the goose and playfully galloped back.

But there was little time for celebration. The migration was on and more geese were already streaming in from the south. From horizon to horizon, the sky was filled with the incredible lace work pattern of advancing snow geese.

Although today's snow goose limit of 20-birds-per-day is unprecedented in our lifetime, you never need to bag that many to have a successful hunt. With one prime bird already in hand, a new dog that was apparently loving the smell of snow geese, and morning sky beginning to refill with the sight and sound of migrating waterfowl, my hunt was already made.

Returning to the blind, the first new flock of high geese was nearly overhead before I switched on the caller. Laying back, I couldn't help but smile as a hundred or more birds simultaneously set their wings. Today was going to be fun.

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

## **PADDLEFISH TRACKING, POACHING CONCERNS**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The air was beyond 'crisp.' It was just plain cold. Luckily, the north wind was blocked a little by the Bellevue lock and dam on the Mississippi River. We bobbed a hundred yards below it, watching water and late winter ice pour over the rollers. "Let out more line until you feel (the half pound sinker) bounce on the bottom. And keep the reel and line facing straight up. Otherwise, it'll cut the line," advised Denny Weiss.

Our target? Paddlefish. For years, researchers have monitored the well being of this species; quite possibly the ugliest creature under the water. Evolving basically unchanged for 300-million years, these pre-Jurassic Park escapees now face 21<sup>st</sup> Century threats; migration blockage created by the lock and dam system, sedimentation and other water quality issues. In the past few years, though, poaching has triggered that evolutionary alarm *big* time.

Weiss, from the Department of Natural Resources Bellevue fisheries station, was pointing our small boat over likely paddlefish holes. Fisheries biologist Mike Steuck and I were sweeping sturdy 8-foot poles—with 20 pound line and large treble hooks—up and down through the water column. With a little luck, one of the hooks would catch the

leathery skin of a paddlefish; 60 to 80 feet below. You don't catch a paddlefish with lure or bait. You snag it.

Steuck had the first hit. Tip up, line taut, he slowly cranked a 20-pounder to the boat. Weiss grabbed the long, flat 'spoonbill' and tugged it on board. The water-bound dinosaur flopped slowly as the two researchers worked it up. Within a couple minutes, they had its weight and length, applied a small ID band and checked to see if it was a recapture. There was no telltale beep as Weiss passed a hand-held metal detector over its bill, indicating it had no previous ID tag. Then, it was back to the water.

For 15 years, Iowa has been part of a 23-state research program, through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. MICRA (Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resources Association) tracks paddlefish growth, migration and overall well-being through the Mississippi-Missouri River systems. On the Missouri River, some have moved more than 400 miles. On the Mississippi, upstream movement is held up by the dams. Moving into larger tributaries, though, it is not uncommon for one to be tracked below Iowa City on the Iowa River, or near Cedar Rapids, on the Cedar River.

However, these days that migration is sometimes from river bed to gourmet shelf. With the collapse of the Caspian Sea caviar industry, demand for the pricey fish eggs has North American sturgeon and paddlefish looking pretty good to the Caviar Crowd. Less than three years ago, an ounce of top Beluga caviar was all yours for \$100. Today, gourmet websites list it for \$300...but also as 'out of stock' and prohibited for interstate trade. Paddlefish roe, or eggs, go for \$18 an ounce...up from \$4 in late 2006!

Now, I've never tried caviar. Well, there was that dare when I was 12 or 13 at Holiday Lake, as we were cleaning bluegills for supper. Maybe that ruined my palate for the high brow delicacy. Still, at \$300 an ounce...or even \$4...I look elsewhere for something to spread on a cracker. The demand is there, though. And it threatens a species that's gotten along just fine, while dinosaurs, mountain ranges and ancient civilizations rose and fell.

Recreational anglers can still snag paddlefish. The daily limit is two and the short, cold weather season really shouldn't put much of a dent in the population. In fact, reproduction has been good over last eight years. The concern, though, is whether the big 30 to 50 pounders and the occasional 60 pounder, will be there in the future. "Only about 11 to 12 percent of the paddlefish we have seen (in the study) have been over 20 pounds," warns Weiss. "Those are our reproducing females that we need to protect. History has shown that whenever an animal is overharvested for its eggs, it disappears from the Earth."

So, steps are being taken. Fisheries and law enforcement officials are worried about illegal commercial harvest of paddlefish; the big ones which are ripped open, have their eggs removed and discarded. With a size limit on those fish (one length limit being considered is 33 inches from the beady little eyes to the fork in the tail), an illegal operator would have no explanation for why *any* large, egg-bearing fish might be on board. Iowa's Natural Resource Commission may get a look at proposed restrictions this year, in time for the 2010 fishing regulations.

## **Paddlefish; Retro-PLUS**

They process oxygen from the water through their gills. They swim like a fish. Beyond that, paddlefish don't act or look a whole lot like your average bluegill, bass or catfish.

Relatively unchanged for 300 million years (predating dinosaurs), their 'spoonbill' sets them apart at first glance. Electrosensory receptors in it help locate food. Filter feeders, they swim with their mouths wide open, processing zooplankton for food. Their skin is tough as leather—no scales. They rely on cartilage rather than bone for a skeleton. A slow growing, slow maturing fish, they only spawn every two or three years; one more reason cited for tougher harvest limits.

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## **POPULAR ARCHERY IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM SPREADING QUICKLY**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

A short, shrill whistle signals 20 kids to step forward, pick out their bow and step to the firing line. As they get set, another whistle gives them the go-ahead to nock their arrows, draw and fire. From there, the air is filled with 100 soft pops as arrows hit their targets, 10 or 15 yards away.

From school gymnasiums and community ranges across Iowa to Veterans Auditorium in Des Moines, 467 young archers took what they learned in school to the state championship level. Iowa's archery in schools program marked its 100<sup>th</sup> school this year. "It's a lifetime activity; something they can get involved in; (archery) provides an affordable opportunity to get into a lifetime skill," notes Sue Chelf, physical education teacher at Coralville's Northwest Middle School.

When I was in high school, I can recall one or two gym classes when the teacher set up some targets and let us take a few shots. And that was it. These days, physical education classes provide a closer look at life skills that you may pursue into adulthood. And they involve more than setting up targets for a day every few years.

At Northwest, for instance, 620 students are offered a two-week introductory course. Johnson County Conservation Department naturalist Brad Friedhof provides the equipment, a history of archery and basic lessons in delivering the arrow safely to the target.

"Teachers are looking for a standards based curriculum...our curriculum has been updated and we have current versions for elementary, middle school and high school," explains Ben Berka, shooting sports coordinator with the Department of Natural Resources. "It meets the skills teachers are looking for today, as far as math, history; all the life skills that they're looking for in those curricula."

And many of those kids want to take it to the next level; say, practice outside of school a couple days a week. A two month season is set up through the winter for competitive meets. If travel is prohibitive, there are 'electronic' meets, in which teams

shoot on their own turf and e-mail scores to compare results. It all culminates at the state championships in March.

“I shot a 209...out of 500. That’s kinda good,” assesses Cardinal Schools fifth grader Shelby Smith, checking results on the big score board. “I like the competition. I love it. It’s fun to win stuff; like when you go to Nationals; someplace else in the United States.”

Alongside her, teammate Cheyenne Phillips took a different approach. “I just like the fun; I like to hunt and stuff and just like getting better; to see how good I actually am,” said the sixth grader.

“That’s one of the things I enjoy; when the kids are competing against themselves and their own skill level,” says Central Decatur teacher—and archery coach—Gene Olsen. “They also learn to work as a team, too. Nobody sits on the bench. They all participate and they know immediately what their score is when they let go of the arrow.”

In his district, the archery program grew out of an industrial arts project to build a bow range...and willingness by bowhunters, teachers and Scout and 4H leaders to take the training. A grant helped pay for that start up phase and that made it easier to pitch to the school. “They were real receptive, once they found out we had trained instructors and all the equipment,” says Olsen. “We supplied it and took care of it through the grant...set up everything for them.”

And students who show a little extra interest are toeing the line at the state meet. “We had about 130 this year,” says Olsen. “They come in and shoot after school; practicing to get ready for the competitions. There’s a pretty big commitment there.” He says the challenge now is to maintain that interest, and line up future financial support and volunteers, to build on what the startup grant established.

That extra interest could pay dividends down the road, too, for hunters and hunting enthusiasts who foot the bill for the archery program. “It really helps the program grow,” says Berka. “We see the dots starting connect; from getting a kid into a bow in PE class and taking that kid out to a tree stand. We’re starting to see lot of success in regard to hunter recruitment.”

## ***Iowa State Championships – National Archery in Schools Program***

### ***Team Summary***

#### **High School**

#### **Score/team**

**3170 Spencer Community School**

**3040 Cardinal Comets**

**3038 Johnston Dragons**

**2891 Diagonal Archery**

**2856 Davenport West High Falcon**

**2846 Bellevue Archery Club**

**2823 Anamosa**

**2772 Mount Vernon**

**2580 Central Decatur**  
**2484 Earlham Country Shooters**

**Middle School**

**Score/team**

**2958 Cardinal Comets**  
**2573 Central Decatur**  
**2416 North Iowa Elem/MS**

**Elementary**

**Score/team**

**2572 Wildcat Archery - Central City**  
**2561 Diagonal Archery**  
**2398 Cardinal Comets**  
**2347 Central Decatur**

**2009 Iowa All State Teams**

**Boys...High School**

**Score/name/team**

557 Kyle Long, Spencer Community Schools  
556 Jacob Hill, Spencer Community Schools  
550 Bryan Tewes, Spencer Community Schools  
548 Mitchell Gross, Spencer Community Schools  
542 Dillon White, Spencer Community Schools  
536 Drew Jackson, Johnston Dragons  
531 Evan Morisch, Spencer Community Schools  
524 Ryan England, Diagonal Archery  
523 Montgomery Laughlin, Cardinal Comets  
521 Ryan Coulson, Johnston Dragons

**Boys...Middle School**

**Score/name/team**

539 Nicholas Gross, Spencer Community Schools  
532 Austin VanWyk, Spencer Community Schools  
518 Connor Grieg Doree, Cardinal Comets  
514 Heath Evans, Diagonal Archery  
510 Eric Dickenson, Hawk Archery Club - North Mah  
503 Hunter White, Spencer Community Schools  
500 Kaleb Dandy, Spencer Community Schools  
500 Samuel Van Berkum, Spencer Community Schools  
497 Samuel MacDonald, Alburnett Archery in the Schools  
495 Kenneth Weaselhead, Diagonal Archery



**Boys...Grade School****Score/name/team**

534 Layne Ruby, Diagonal Archery  
528 Zackary Bisinger, Alburnett Archery in the Schools  
469 Trevor Albert, Cardinal Comets  
460 Cody Carter, Alburnett Archery in the Schools  
458 Justin Conger, Cardinal Comets  
445 Jacob Taylor, Diagonal Archery  
431 Colter Pickering, Diagonal Archery  
429 Drew Mollenhauer, Wildcat Archery - Central City  
424 Colton Carter, Cardinal Comets  
421 Blake Butler, Diagonal Archery

**Girls...High School****Score/name/team**

562 Erin Krei, Spencer, Community Schools  
549 Steffanie Bisinger, Alburnett Archery in the Schools  
548 Kathleen Carter, Cardinal Comets  
531 Katelyn Yauslin, Alburnett Archery in the Schools  
528 Taylor Geisinger, Spencer Community Schools  
525 Anna Kurns, Johnston Dragons  
517 Katie Grassi, Anamosa  
511 Cassandra Galm, Spencer Community Schools  
508 Stephanie Hart, Cardinal Comets  
503 Erin Franklin, Cardinal Comets

**Girls...Middle School****Score/name/team**

551 Tymbrie Snobl, Alburnett Archery in the Schools  
533 Schylar Conger, Cardinal Comets  
522 Brianna Roberts, Cardinal Comets  
515 Vanessa Lemke, Cardinal Comets  
488 Danielle Wycoff, Cardinal Comets  
488 Kelsey Waddle, Cardinal Comets  
480 Alissabeth Sloan, Cardinal Comets  
465 Courtney Smith, Cardinal Comets  
458 Sky Hoffman, Diagonal Archery  
456 Truly Mothershead, Central Decatur

**Girls...Grade School****Score/name/team**

505 Kyra Ellis, Wildcat Archery - Central City  
494 Tessa Engen, Wildcat Archery - Central City  
479 Allison Metcalf, Cardinal Comets  
473 Kelsey Yauslin, Alburnett Archery in the Schools  
459 Annie Detweiler, Wildcat Archery - Central City

455 Jenna Linder, Cardinal Comets  
437 Amber Decker, Wildcat Archery - Central City  
429 Kasydi Klommhaus, Diagonal Archery  
420 Jeandarrell Waybill, Wildcat Archery - Central City  
420 Jaci Haidsiak, Diagonal Archery

**High school scholarship Winners,  
Iowa State Archery Association/Iowa Bowhunters Association**

Girl--Anna Kurns, Johnston Dragons  
Boy--Jacob Hill, Spencer Community Schools

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